DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 480 CG 024 944

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TITLE Gender Differences in the Decision To Seek Post-Retirement Employment.

PUB DATE Nov 92

NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations (54th, Orlando, FL, November 5-10, 1992).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Females; Labor Force Nonparticipants; Older Adults; *Reentry Workers; *Retirement; *Sex Differences

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors which may influence the decision to seek employment after retirement from one's primary occupation, and to determine if these factors are similar for males and females. Data were collected from 540 western land grant university employees from ages 40-65 who were employed in positions ranging from ground maintenance workers to upper administration. Cases containing missing data were deleted from the analysis which resulted in a sample size of 331 respondents; 217 males and 114 females. Median income range of the respondents was $35,000-$40,000. Respondents were asked about their attitude toward retirement, current health status, health status of spouse, number of children they were supporting, and number and sources of retirement income they expected. Stepwise regression analysis was done to select the set of variables that best predicted post-retirement employment. For males, post-retirement employment income, attitude toward retirement, and financial drain yielded the best predictive equation. Interestingly however, financial drain was not a significant predictor of post-retirement employment among the female respondents, and only post-retirement employment income and attitude toward retirement were significant. Implications of these findings are discussed. (Author)

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Presented at the Poster Session of the NCFR Conference
Nov. 4 - 10, 1992

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Gender Differences In The Decision To Seek Post-Retirement Employment

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The purpose of this study is to identify the factors which may influence the decision to seek employment after retirement from one's primary occupation, and to determine if these factors are similar for males and females. Data were collected from 540 western land grant university employees from ages 40-65 and employed in positions ranging from ground maintenance workers to upper administration. Cases containing missing data were deleted from the analysis which resulted in a sample size of 331 respondents; 217 males and 114 females. Median income range of the respondents was $35,000 - $40,000. Respondents were asked about their attitude toward retirement, current health status, health status of spouse, number of children they were supporting, and the number and sources of retirement income they expected. Stepwise regression analysis was done to select the set of variables that best predicted post-retirement employment. For males, post-retirement employment income, attitude toward retirement, and financial drain yielded the best predictive equation. Interestingly however, financial drain was not a significant predictor of post-retirement employment among the female respondents, and only post-retirement employment income and attitude toward retirement were significant. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Introduction

Post-retirement employment occurs when a person has retired from his/her primary occupation but chooses to remain active in the labor force. Although the labor force participation rate of aged males declined during the second half of the 20th century, recent evidence suggests (Iams & Gross, in progress) that increasingly greater numbers of males and females are seeking employment during their retirement years. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the factors which may influence the decision to seek employment after retirement from one's primary occupation, and to determine if these factors were similar for males and females. The reason for looking at males and females separately was that George, Fillenbaum and Palmore (1984) concluded that the variables which predicted retirement among males do not satisfactorily predict retirement among females. Therefore it was reasonable to expect that men and women may have different reasons for deciding to return to work during their retirement years.

Review of Literature

The work and retirement patterns of female workers have been overlooked in the literature until recently. However, for the first time in American history more women are in the labor force than out of it (Gerson, 1985), clearly suggesting that the employment and retirement of women has become a socially significant phenomenon (Szinovacz, 1987).

In reviewing the labor statistics of male and female employees, Clark (1988) concluded that the decline in the labor force participation rate of male employees has extended to age 55-64 during the last 20 years. During this time, the proportion of women 55-64 has remained relatively steady despite the increasing numbers of female employees age

45-54. Clark implies that the employment stability of the older female cohort suggests that women are leaving the work force in much the same pattern as male employees. However, George, Fillenbaum, and Palmore (1984) concluded that the variables which predict retirement among men do not predict retirement among women. Therefore, although the patterns of work and retirement may be similar for men and women, the reasons for selecting one or the other may be meaningfully different for women than for men.

Health Status

The literature generally suggests that health is the most immediate predictor of early retirement decisions or the propensity to continue working past the "normal" retirement age. According to Howell and Leon (1988), health status is positively related to post-retirement employment. Analyzing data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) they concluded that those who report health problems occurring during the year preceding retirement are 44% more likely to retire permanently than persons who do not.

Schulz (1988) suggests that there is an interaction between health and the availability of pension income. He suggests that although some people may not be able to continue working because of a totally disabling condition, others with lesser disabilities may choose to discontinue work activity given an alternative income available from a pension. However, because strong androcentric traditions make it difficult for women to gain parity in the workplace (Holder & Anderson, 1989) in the form of wages and benefits, health status may have a differential effect on the retirement/employment decisions of males and females.

Financial Drain

Financial drain is the expectation of economic burden which is a result of the financial liability of dependent children and/or extraordinary medical expense as a result of chronic or acute personal/spousal illness. The conventional perspective suggests that the male is the primary wage earner, and is financially responsible for the well-being of his family. Therefore, it could be expected that financial drain may positively influence employment beyond the "normal" retirement age. The employment of women is considered secondary to their parenting and caregiving roles and not essential to family financial well-being. Therefore, financial drain may not influence the retirement decisions of female employees. However, the increasing number of female heads-of-household would imply that this traditional division of roles is no longer viable and it is reasonably expected that financial drain may influence the employment decisions of males and females in a similar manner.

Sources of Income

Social Security is the major source of income for individuals over the age of 65. Earnings, employer sponsored pension programs and asset income comprise important sources of support for the elderly as well. Kart, Longino, and Ullmann (1989) identified the economically advantaged as those who are more likely to have income from assets, and pensions or annuities. On the average, household income is 68% greater in economically advantaged households than in all retired households. However, these sources of income are not distributed equitably across the male and female elderly populations.

Because of occupational segregation into lower paying service sector jobs, part-time employment, and discontinuous work experience, women are less likely than men to

participate in employer-sponsored pension plans (Rix, 1989). Because employment has traditionally been viewed as a man's domain, retirement planning has generally addressed the needs of men and have failed to focus on the unique needs of women. In addition, the increasing divorce rate among older couples has resulted in greater numbers of women approaching old age alone; with fewer options, greater uncertainty and fewer economic resources than aging males. In 1985, 55% of all households below the poverty line were headed by women, including the elderly. It is expected that the number of sources of retirement income may be greater for males than for females. However, the way in which this influences the propensity to post-retirement employment is not clear.

Sample Description

Data were collected from 540 western land grant university employees as part of the W-176 Western Region Research Project conducted during 1988-1989. The participants were ages 40-65 and were employed in positions ranging from ground maintenance workers to upper administration. Cases containing missing data were deleted from the analysis which resulted in a sample size of approximately 331 respondents; 217 males and 114 females. The median income range of the respondents was $35,000 - $40,000.

Methods

Respondents were questioned about their attitude toward retirement, about their current health status, the health status of the spouse, the number of children they were supporting, and the number and sources of retirement income they expected. The sources of income were classified as social security, private or military pensions; employment; private investments such as IRAs, savings, and annuities; family; and public welfare. An

drain was not a significant predictor of post-retirement employment among the female respondents. Post-retirement employment income and attitude toward retirement were the only significant predictors of the female respondents. This equation yielded a multiple R of .354 and an R^2 of .125.

Discussion

Attitude toward retirement, sources of retirement income, and financial drain were significant predictors of post-retirement employment for males. However, financial drain was not a significant predictor of anticipatory post-retirement employment among the female preretirees in this sample. The reasons for these observed differences will be discussed from the feminist perspective.

Females are generally segregated into low paying service jobs which often lack retirement benefits. If the female anticipates financial burden as a result of dependent children still living in the home or poor health of her spouse she may not retire at all but continue with her primary employment. Thus, females in this situation may not seek post-retirement employment. In addition, the generally lower economic status of females throughout their lifetime may result in lower expectations regarding retirement or a "false consciousness" which prevents them from realizing how bad circumstances really are or how bad they can become.

Because financial drain is not a significant predictor of post-retirement employment among the female respondents in this sample it seems to confirm the androcentric attitude which validates the primacy of the male as the breadwinner, and the financial contribution of women as secondary to the well-being of the family. Within the feminist perspective

independent variable, Financial Drain, was constructed by summing the value of the responses regarding number of children and health. The higher the number, the greater the financial drain imposed on the family. Demographic information was also collected from the respondents and included in the analysis.

The dependent variable, post-retirement employment was operationalized as the importance of employment opportunities in choosing a retirement location.

Analysis

Separate analyses were computed for the male and female preretirees. Thirty-eight percent of the male respondents and 50% percent of the female respondents anticipate either part or full time employment sometime during their retirement years. Correlational analysis suggested that for males and females; as the number of dependent children increased, or as the health status of the respondent or the spouse became less than excellent, there was a greater expectation that the respondent would seek employment sometime during his/her retirement.

Attitude toward retirement was also significantly related to the expectation of post-retirement employment for both groups ($p < .000$). This suggested that as one's attitude toward retirement became more positive, the expectation of post-retirement employment decreased.

Stepwise regression analysis was done to select the set of variables that best predicted anticipatory post-retirement employment. Post-retirement employment income, attitude toward retirement, and financial drain yielded the best predictive equation for the male respondents, resulting in a multiple R of .415 and an R^2 of .172. Interestingly, financial

however, several alternative explanations are proposed. The female respondents in this sample may be confirming the social expectation of primary caretaker for aged parents as well as children. Therefore, number of dependents, and not just number of children may more accurately describe the components of financial drain for female preretirees.

The female's desire for post-retirement employment may not be an economic issue at all, but rather, a socio-emotional issue that extends beyond the family. The relationship between attitude and post-retirement employment suggests that the advantages of employment; such as status, a sense of achievement, and the opportunity for socialization may be more important than the economic benefits derived from labor market activity.

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Authors Notes

Data for this paper were collected under the auspices of Western Region Project W-176 "Housing and Locational Decisions of the Maturing Population: Opportunities for the Western Region", the Agricultural Experiment Station, College of Agriculture, The University of Arizona.